

University of Alberta

Automatic Ruins

by

Colin Lyons

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Printmaking

Department of Art & Design

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Winter 2012

Edmonton, Alberta

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COLIN LYONS

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EDUCATION

2009-12 University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, Master of Fine Arts, Printmaking
2003-07 Mount Allison University, Sackville, N.B., Bachelor of Fine Arts (with distinction)

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 *Automatic Ruins*, Artspace, Peterborough, ON (upcoming spring 2013)
Automatic Ruins, FAB Gallery, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
- 2011 *Automatic Ruins*, Hamilton Artists Inc., Hamilton, ON
- 2010 *Industrial Monuments*, Gallery Page and Strange, Halifax, NS
Nautical Monuments, New Brunswick Museum, organized by Third Space Gallery, Saint John, NB
Monuments Industriels, GRAVE (Groupement des Arts Visuels de Victoriaville) Victoriaville, QC
Boom Town, Engramme - centre de production/ diffusion en estampe actuelle, Québec, QC
Fitzgerald Rig, ODD Gallery, Dawson City, YT
- 2009 *Fitzgerald Rig*, Centre des Arts Actuels Skol, Montreal, QC
Boom Town, AKA Gallery, Saskatoon, SK
- 2008 *Boom Town*, TRUCK, +15 Project Space, Calgary, AB
Boom Town, Open Studio, Toronto, ON
Boom Town and Ford Motor Co. of Canada, 1951: After Karsh, Gallery Lambton, Sarnia, ON (off-site)
- 2006 Gallery Lambton, Entrance Gallery, Sarnia, ON
- 2005 START Gallery, Sackville, NB

DUO EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 *Oceanex Avalon*, Eastern Edge Gallery, St. John's, NL (with *Yorodeo*)
- 2009 *Boom Town*, Eyelevel Gallery, Halifax, NS (with *Soft Turns*)
- 2008 *Architectures for Nostalgia*, Niagara Artists' Centre, St. Catharines, ON (with Andrea Kastner)

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 *The New Alberta Contemporaries*, Esker Foundation Gallery, Calgary, AB (June 2012)
The Unseen, AMS Gallery, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC
Unstable Natures, Latitude 53, Edmonton, AB
Urban Nature, Malton Gallery, Pearson International Airport, Toronto, ON
- 2010 *In Between Surfaces*, Green Street Printmaking and Book Arts Gallery, Lamar Dodd School of Art, University of Georgia, Athens, GA/ SNAP (Society of Northern Alberta Print-Artists), Edmonton, AB
- 2009 *Illumination* (Nuit Blanche à Montréal), Red Bird Gallery, Montreal, QC
- 2008 *Le Bruit et le Silence*, Galerie Circulaire, Montreal, QC
- 2007 *Straight & Curly*, Galerie Sans Nom, Salle Sans Sous, Moncton, NB
Mount Allison University B.F.A. Graduate Exhibition, Owens Art Gallery, Sackville, NB
- 2006 *Puerta de la Lima*, Struts Gallery, Sackville, NB
Atlantic Student Print Exhibition, Anna Leonowens Gallery, NSCAD, Halifax, NS
The Print Show, John B. Aird Gallery, Toronto, ON
- 2005 *LOOK*, Gallery Lambton, Sarnia, ON

ARTIST RESIDENCIES

- 2010 Atelier d'estampe Imago, Artist Residency Program, Moncton, NB
Third Space Gallery, Passages + Prototypes Series, Saint John, NB
- 2008 St. Michael's Printshop, Visiting Artist Program, St. John's, NL
Gallery Lambton, Emerging Artist Series, Sarnia, ON
Atelier Circulaire, Artist Residency Program, Montreal, QC

AWARDS/ GRANTS/ SCHOLARSHIPS

- 2011 Alberta Foundation for the Arts: Individual Project Grant, Visual Art & New Media
The Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Artist Grant
Alberta Advanced Education Achievement Scholarship Program: Graduate Student Scholarship
- 2010 Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Profiling Alberta's Graduate Students Award
Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec: Québec – New Brunswick Artist-in-Residence Program
- 2009 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada: Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada
Graduate Scholarship - Master's
University of Alberta Master's Recruitment Scholarship
Walter H. Johns Graduate Fellowship, University of Alberta
Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec: Development Grant, Research and Creation
- 2008 The Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Artist Grant
- 2007 Nomination of the Canadian Bureau: Commonwealth Scholarship - United Kingdom
Dr. J.E.A. Crake Performance Award in Fine Arts, Mount Allison University
First Prize, Mount Allison University 11th Annual Printmaking Competition
- 2004-07 Dean's Honour List, Mount Allison University
- 2006 J.E.A. Crake Scholarship in Humanities, Mount Allison University
J.E.A. Crake Foundation Arts Internship, Mount Allison University
Simon Chang & Phyllis Levine Foundation Scholarship
- 2005 James Arthur Gairdner Fine Arts Scholarship
J.E.A. Crake Scholarship in Humanities, Mount Allison University
- 2004 First Prize, Mount Allison University 8th Annual Printmaking Competition
- 2003 Helen Kavanagh Nicol Foundation Scholarship
Gallery in the Grove Visual Arts Scholarship
Del and Bob App Memorial Award in Fine Arts
Rick Garner Memorial Award

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2011 Instructor: Art Fundamentals, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
Substitute Instructor: Advanced Word and Image in Printmaking, Intermediate/ Advanced Figurative
Sculpture, Art Fundamentals, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
Etching Workshop: *The Disappearing Image*, The Print Studio, Hamilton, ON
- 2010 Teaching Assistant: Art Fundamentals (Royden Mills), University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
Teaching Assistant: Printmaking - Intermediate Studies II (Helen Gerritzen), University of Alberta
- 2008 Etching Workshop: *The Plate as a Sculptural Object*, St. Michael's Printshop, St. John's, NL
- 2007 Youth Art Instructor: Gallery Lambton, Sarnia, ON
- 2006 Collage Workshop: *A Different Kind of Street Art*, Gallery Lambton, Sarnia, ON

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2010, 11 Graduate Research Assistant: Sean Caulfield, University of Alberta
- 2009 Programming Committee: Artist Residency Program, Atelier Circulaire, Montreal, QC
- 2008-09 Regular Member: Atelier Circulaire, Montreal, QC
- 2007 Permanent Collection Assistant: Gallery Lambton, Sarnia, ON
- 2006 Programming Committee: Exhibition/ Residency Program, Struts Gallery, Sackville, NB
Studio/ Education Assistant: Gallery Lambton, Sarnia, ON

ARTIST LECTURES

- 2010 *Oceanex Avalon*, Eastern Edge Gallery, St. John's, NL
Nautical Monuments, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, NB
 Artist Residency Program, Atelier d'estampe Imago, Moncton, NB
Monuments Industriels, GRAVE, Victoriaville, QC
Fitzgerald Rig, Klondike Institute of Art and Culture, Dawson City, YT
- 2009 *Fitzgerald Rig*, Centre des Arts Actuels Skol, Montreal, QC
Boom Town, AKA Gallery, Saskatoon, SK
- 2008 Artist Residency Program, Atelier Circulaire, Montreal, QC

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2011 Vegh, Stephanie. "Akimblog: Hamilton and St. Catharines", *Akimbo*, (Online), May 31, 2011.
- Kanbara, Bryce. "long ago and far away", *Hamilton Artists Inc.*, Hamilton, ON.
- 2010 Carter Flinn, Sue. "2010 Critic's Picks", *Akimbo*, (Online), December 13, 2010.
- Gordon, Holly. "Going Industrial", *The Coast*, Halifax, NS, November 4, 2010.
- Laugher, Nick. "Forgotten Landscapes", *The Dalhousie Gazette*, Halifax, NS, November 4, p.12
- Sullivan, Joan. "Akimblog: St. John's", *Akimbo*, (Online), September 21, 2010.
- Lloyd, Chris. "Oceanex Avalon", *Eastern Edge Gallery*, St. John's, NL.
- Landry, Mike. "Objects of Obsolescence", *Telegraph-Journal*, Saint John, NB, July 3, 2010, S3.
- Baillargeon, Christiane. "La Marque noire du paysage industriel", *Vie des Arts*, Montreal, QC, n. 218, p.95.
- Rousseau, Christine. "Post-Boom", *Impact Campus*, Université Laval, Québec, QC, March 23, p. 24.
- Blomgren, Lance. "Monument to a Monument", *ODD Gallery*, Dawson City, YT.
- 2009 Tillman, R.L.. "Colin Lyons", *Printeresting*, (Online), December 2, 2009.
- Turcotte, Geneviève. "Colin Lyons chez Skol", *ARPRIM*, Montreal, QC, November 2009, p. 9
- Morel, Julie. "Colin Lyons", *Incident*, (Online), November 1, 2009.
- Lloyd, Chris. "Fitzgerald Rig", *Centre des Arts Actuels Skol*, Montreal, QC.
- Leroux-Nega, Emmanuel. "L'art de l'obsolescence industrielle", *Quartier Libre*, Montreal, QC, v. 17, n. 5.
- DeWolf, Stacy. "Artsweek: Homage to Oil", *Mirror*, Montreal, QC, October 8, 2009, p. 42.
- 2008 Dault, Gary Michael. "Gallery Going: Colin Lyons at Open Studio", *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, ON, October 11, 2008, R16.
- Goddard, Peter. "Critics' Choice", *Toronto Star*, Toronto, ON, October 9, 2008, E2.
- Diedrichs, Rebecca. "Boom Town Haunting", *Open Studio*, Toronto, ON.
- Balzer, David. "Colin Lyons at Open Studio", *Toronto Life*, Toronto, ON, October 2008.
- De Palma, Kristen. "Letting it All Hang Out", *PULSE Niagara*, St. Catharines, ON, Vol. 22, No. 42.
- Pedros, Natasha. "Architectures for Nostalgia". *Niagara Artists Centre*, St. Catharines, ON.
- Hadley, Matthew. "NAC hosts Architectures for Nostalgia", *The Brock Press*, St. Catharines, ON, Sept. 2.
- Daniels, Lisa. "Boom Town and Ford Motor Co.: After Karsh", *Gallery Lambton*, Sarnia, ON.
- Morden, Paul. "Booming Art", *The Sarnia Observer*, Sarnia, ON, July 8, 2008, A3.
- 2005 Rumleski, Kathy. "Leaving his Mark", *The London Free Press*, London, ON, Dec. 22, 2005, C1.

RADIO/ TELEVISION

- 2010 Haire, Cecil. "The Morning Show", *CBC Radio One*, St. John's, NL, September 3, 2010.
- Hains, Jasmin. "LeZarts Studio", *VOX Québec*, Québec, QC, March 15, 2010.
- Guay, Jean-Pierre. "L'Aérospatial", *Radio Mémoire*, Québec, QC, March 10, 2010.
- Lachaussee, Catherine and Martine Côté. "Ça me dit de prendre le temps - Chroniques", *Radio-Canada*, Québec, QC, March 6, 2010.
- 2008 Sasse, Richard. "The Source", *TV COGECO*, Niagara Falls, ON, September 2, 2008.

Represented by Gallery Page and Strange, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Artist Statement

Colin Lyons: *Automatic Ruins*

Chemical Valley, a sprawling landscape of towering smokestacks and petroleum refineries, lies a fifteen minute drive from where I grew up. It rises on the outskirts of Sarnia, oblivious to my sleepy hometown, where oil derricks once dotted the landscape, making its inhabitants the wealthiest in the world. One hundred years ago, the oil ran out, condemning Petrolia, Ontario to fade into irrelevance. The contrast between these neighbouring communities confronts us with the reality that much of our industry is inherently sacrificial: the continual extraction of resources naturally bringing an economy nearer to collapse.

“We gaze at it in wonder, a kind of wonder which in itself is a form of dawning horror, for somehow we know by instinct that [they] cast the shadow of their own destruction before them, and are designed from the first with an eye to their later existence as ruins.”¹

We live in an era marked by an accelerating pace of change, where there are ever increasing quantities of the soon to be obsolete. Planned obsolescence, the integration of its own demise into a newly manufactured object, is a widely-acknowledged fact in contemporary technology. To me, this notion parallels the idea of creative destruction, which assumes that a void will inevitably attract new growth. My own work reinterprets this idea by making ‘rising into ruin’ the goal, rather than a simple by-product.

I use printmaking as a re-enactment of the rise and fall of industrial economies. I bring an etching plate through a complete arc, from raw material, to finished product (a refined image), and then to ruination. After printing my plates, I mark the end of the edition in deliberate ways: by soldering the plates together, scraping away at their surface, making batteries from them, or transforming them into ruins. My work understands ruins as both object and process. While physical remnants of industry are often spectacular symbols of change, the process of ruination typically goes unnoticed.

My process evokes an alchemical creation of time, memory and historical aura. Ruins function as palimpsests, creating a unique simultaneous awareness of the past and present. We are confronted with past notions of progress and utopia which have since proven to be failures, leaving visible traces of their unfulfilled promise. On the other hand, they offer us a key to imagining the future in a world where we are frozen in the present by the struggle to keep up. Ruins are mute witnesses, which “define, without trying, the memory traces of an abandoned set of futures”²

This act of making ruins, of imitating nature to transform these artifacts, evokes images of premodern alchemical experiments. In its quest to transform base metals into gold, alchemy sought salvation through the creation of riches. This utopian system was deeply associated with immortality, and likewise it seems that so much of today’s industrial pursuits are seeking just that: their own unimpeded growth and self-perpetuation. While the folly of alchemy has long been accepted, the cracks in the notion of industrial progress have only begun to be exposed through deindustrialization. Through these *Automatic Ruins* I am using alchemy to create ruins of modernity.

¹ W.G. Sebald. *Austerlitz*. Trans. Anthea Bell. (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2001), 19.

² Robert Smithson. “A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey”. *The Writings of Robert Smithson*. (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 55.

Selected Bibliography

Colin Lyons: *Automatic Ruins*

- Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken Books, 2007. p. 253-264.
- Bennett, Jane. "A Life of Metal." *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010. p. 52-61.
- Edensor, Tim. *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality*. Oxford, UK: Berg, 2005.
- Hell, Julia and Andreas Schönle, ed. *Ruins of Modernity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
- High, Steven and David Lewis. *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization*. Ithaca, NY: IRL Press, 2007.
- Holt, Nancy, ed. *The Writings of Robert Smithson*. New York: New York University Press, 1979.
- Huyssen, Andreas. "Nostalgia for Ruins" New York: *Grey Room*. (2006): No. 23, p. 6-21.
- Huyssen, Andreas. *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Koselleck, Reinhart. "'Spaces of Experience' and 'Horizons of Expectation'." *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. Trans. Kieth Tribe, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985. p. 267-288.
- Lange, Susanne. *Bernd and Hilla Becher: Life and Work*. Trans. Jeremy Gaines. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007.
- Lee, Pamela. *Object to be Destroyed: the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.
- Nelson, Robert and Margaret Olin, ed. *Monuments and Memory, Made and Unmade*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." Trans. Marc Roudebush. *Representations*. 26.1 (1989): 7-24.
- Riegl, Alois. "The Modern Cult of Monuments: its Character and its Origin" *The Nineteenth Century Visual Culture Reader*. Vanessa Schwartz and Jeannene Przyblyski ed. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Sebald, Winfried Georg. *Austerlitz*. Trans. Anthea Bell. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2001.
- Wamberg, Jacob ed. *Art & Alchemy*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006.
- Yablon, Nick. *Untimely Ruins: An Archaeology of American Urban Modernity, 1819-1919*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

DVD Image List

Colin Lyons: *Automatic Ruins*

File Name: lyons.01

Title: Automatic Ruin #26

Date: 2012

Materials: zinc etching plates, copper sulfate, Plexiglas, galvanized steel

Dimensions: 91 x 46 x 46cm

File Name: lyons.02

Title: Automatic Ruin #26

Date: 2012

Materials: zinc etching plates, copper sulfate, Plexiglas, galvanized steel

Dimensions: 91 x 46 x 46cm

File Name: lyons.03

Title: Installation View, Industrial Palimpsest #1-6/ Rising Into Ruin

Date: 2011-2012

Materials: etching, photoetching, chine colle

File Name: lyons.04

Title: Industrial Palimpsest #1-6

Date: 2011-2012

Materials: etching, photoetching, chine colle

Dimensions: 152 x 305cm

File Name: lyons.05

Title: Industrial Palimpsest #3

Date: 2011

Materials: etching, chine colle

Dimensions: 46 x 46cm

File Name: lyons.06

Title: Industrial Palimpsest #3

Date: 2011

Materials: etching, photoetching, chine colle

Dimensions: 46 x 46cm

File Name: lyons.07

Pickup By: 12/2/2012

Secc

60033

Automatic ruins

DVD Image List
Colin Lyons: *Automatic Ruins*

File Name: lyons.01
Title: Automatic Ruin #26
Date: 2012
Materials: zinc etching plates, copper sulfate, Plexiglas, galvanized steel
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Title: Automatic Ruin #26
Date: 2012
Materials: zinc etching plates, copper sulfate, Plexiglas, galvanized steel
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Title: Installation View, Industrial Palimpsest #1-6/ Rising Into Ruin
Date: 2011-2012
Materials: etching, photoetching, chine colle

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Title: Industrial Palimpsest #1-6
Date: 2011-2012
Materials: etching, photoetching, chine colle
Dimensions: 152 x 305cm

File Name: lyons.05
Title: Industrial Palimpsest #3
Date: 2011
Materials: etching, chine colle
Dimensions: 46 x 46cm

File Name: lyons.06
Title: Industrial Palimpsest #3
Date: 2011
Materials: etching, photoetching, chine colle
Dimensions: 46 x 46cm

File Name: lyons.07
Title: Rising Into Ruin
Date: 2012
Materials: etching, photoetching
Dimensions: 213 x 213cm

File Name: lyons.08
Title: The Alchemist
Date: 2012
Materials: zinc etching plates, copper etching plates, zinc sulfate, copper sulfate, cast tin, electrical wire, Plexiglas, galvanized steel
Dimensions: 152 x 305 x 91cm

File Name: lyons.09

Title: The Alchemist

Date: 2012

Materials: zinc etching plates, copper etching plates, zinc sulfate, copper sulfate, electrical wire, Plexiglas

Dimensions: 152 x 46 x 46cm

File Name: lyons.10

Title: The Alchemist (detail)

Date: 2012

Materials: copper etching plate, copper sulfate, cast tin, electrical wire, Plexiglas, galvanized steel

Dimensions: 46 x 91 x 46cm

File Name: lyons.11

Title: The Alchemist (detail)

Date: 2012

Materials: zinc etching plates, copper etching plates, zinc sulfate, copper sulfate, electrical wire, Plexiglas

File Name: lyons.12

Title: The Alchemist (detail)

Date: 2012

Materials: copper plated tin casts, copper

Dimensions: 10 x 610 x 20cm

File Name: lyons.13

Title: The Alchemist (detail)

Date: 2012

Materials: copper plated tin casts, copper

Dimensions: 10 x 13 x 8cm

File Name: lyons.14

Title: Unfinished Ruin

Date: 2011

Materials: zinc etching plates, copper sulfate

Dimensions: 61 x 91 x 61cm

File Name: lyons.15

Title: Installation View, Unfinished Ruins (Pumps)

Date: 2011-2012

Materials: zinc etching plates, copper sulfate, Plexiglas, ferric chloride, steel

Dimensions: 229 x 213 x 76cm

File Name: lyons.16

Title: Unfinished Ruins (Pumps)

Date: 2011-2012

Materials: zinc etching plates, copper sulfate, Plexiglas, ferric chloride, steel

Dimensions: 229 x 213 x 76cm

File Name: lyons.17

Title: Unfinished Ruins (Pumps)

Date: 2011-2012

Materials: zinc etching plates, copper sulfate, Plexiglas, ferric chloride, steel

Dimensions: 229 x 213 x 76cm

File Name: lyons.18
Title: Strata
Date: 2012
Materials: copper precipitate, Plexiglas
Dimensions: 46 x 46 x 3cm

File Name: lyons.19
Title: Automatic Ruins #1-25
Date: 2010-2012
Materials: zinc etching plates, copper sulfate, galvanized steel
Dimensions: 61 x 229 x 229cm

File Name: lyons.20
Title: Automatic Ruins #1-25
Date: 2010-2012
Materials: zinc etching plates, copper sulfate, galvanized steel
Dimensions: 61 x 229 x 229cm

File Name: lyons.21
Title: Automatic Ruin #18 (detail)
Date: 2011
Materials: zinc etching plates, copper sulfate, galvanized steel
Dimensions: 23 x 30 x 13cm

File Name: lyons.22
Title: Automatic Ruin #15
Date: 2011
Materials: zinc etching plates, copper sulfate, galvanized steel
Dimensions: 25 x 18 x 18cm

File Name: lyons.23
Title: Archive
Date: 2012
Materials: photoetching, chine colle
Dimensions: 76 x 229cm

File Name: lyons.24
Title: Archive (detail)
Date: 2012
Materials: photoetching, chine colle
Dimensions: 76 x 76cm

File Name: lyons.25
Title: Archive (detail)
Date: 2012
Materials: photoetching, chine colle
Dimensions: 15 x 15cm

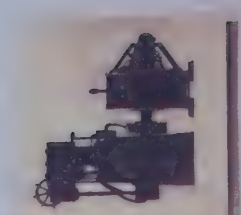
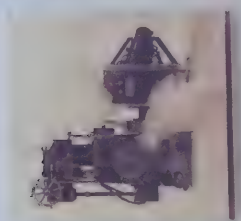
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AUTOMATIC RUINS





































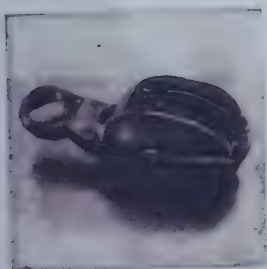
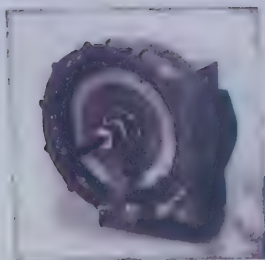














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